



ARMENIANS ON THE AEGEAN: THE CITY OF SMYRNA

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The city of Smyrna (Armenian: *Zmiurnia*; Turkish derived from Greek: *Izmir*) was an ancient Greek foundation in Ionia on the west coast of Asia Minor. Captured by the Turks from the Byzantine Empire in 1424, it remained a center of Greek life and culture until the final expulsion of its Christian population in 1922. Located at the end of a broad inlet of the Aegean Sea, the Izmir *korfezi* (gulf), the largest seaport in Asia Minor and one of the finest harbors in the world, Smyrna had a large, highly mixed cosmopolitan community that included an Armenian colony of long standing first mentioned in 1261.¹ Because its population was so unusual, being predominantly Christian until 1922, the Turks called the city *giaour* (infidel) Izmir. Surrounded by green hills that framed the entire bay and dominated by the twin peaks of Mount Pagos, Smyrna had an exceptionally beautiful setting. The second largest city in the Ottoman Empire and the capital of the *vilayet* (province) of Aidin, it was the center of the economic and cultural life of the Asiatic provinces. Generally a healthy town, Smyrna suffered from intense heat in the summer with temperatures up to 39 Centigrade/102 Fahrenheit but tempered by the *Imbatos*, a sea breeze which blew nearly every day. Winters were cold, with a damp, chilly wind, but, although there was usually snow on the summits of Mount Pagos, it rarely snowed in the city, and spring and autumn were always delightful.²

¹ "Izmir," *Haykakan Sovetakan Hanragitaran* [Armenian Soviet Encyclopedia], vol. 4 (Erevan, Armenian Academy of Sciences, 1978), pp. 312-13.

² For details on the vilayet, see Vital Cuinet. *La Turquie d'Asie: géographique administrative, statistique, descriptive et raisonnée de chaque province de l'Asie Mineure*, 4 vols. (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1890-1895), vol. 3, pp. 337-685.

Population

The population of Smyrna near the turn of the twentieth century comprised some 250,000 people, less than a quarter of whom were Muslims. Besides the 52,000 local Greeks, there were some 45,000 "Hellenes" (Greeks who had moved from mainland Greece itself and the Greek islands), 16,000 Jews, 11,000 Armenians, and small colonies of Americans, British, French, Germans, Italians, Dutch, Austrians, Persians, and other nationalities.³ A highly cosmopolitan and colorful city, until late in the nineteenth century the streets of Smyrna were livened by the dress of Europe, Turkey, Egypt, Persia, and especially Greece and the Greek islands just offshore. Two particular elements in the population were the "Franks," people born in the Ottoman Empire to European parents or grandparents, and the "Levantines," who were part Frank and part native—the native side being usually Greek or Armenian. Although born in the Ottoman Empire, these people maintained their European nationality, clung to their rights under the privileges granted under the Capitulations (special concessions which, in effect, granted diplomatic immunity to nearly all foreigners in the empire), and tended to intermarry with one another or to try to marry their daughters to Europeans newly arrived in the city. Nowhere were there said to be so many eligible young ladies available for matrimony as there were in Smyrna.⁴

Protected by the Capitulations and speaking many languages, most of the Franks and Levantines were active in trade, business, and shop-keeping, and many were exceedingly rich, with large, beautiful homes appointed in the latest European styles. Their lives were virtually indistinguishable from those of the residents of any European Mediterranean port city, whom the Greeks and Armenians of Smyrna tended to emulate. Hakob Kosian has gathered the following statistics for the earlier population of Smyrna:⁵

³ Ibid., pp. 353-56; Marjorie Housepian [Dobkin], *The Smyrna Affair* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1971; republished as *Smyrna 1922: The Destruction of a City* (New York: New Market Press, 1972, and Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1988).

⁴ Housepian, *Smyrna Affair*, p. 89.

⁵ Hakob Kosian, *Hayk i Zmiurnia ev i shrjakays* [Armenians of Smyrna and Its Surroundings], 2 vols. (Vienna: Mekhitarist Press, 1899), vol. 1, p. 43.

Date	Total Population	Armenian Population
1631	90,000	8,000
1731	76,000	7,000
1776	102,000	6,000
1812	106,000	10,000
1840	130,000	5,000
1861	123,788	7,000
1890	250,000	6,683
1898	340,000	11,000

Administration

At the head of the vilayet of Aidin stood the *vali* (governor), assisted by a council upon which the Greek and Armenian archbishops, the chief rabbi, and the representatives of the Protestant and Catholic communities had seats, and, because of the large Christian and European population of the city, the Sublime Porte (the Ottoman government), with goodwill or not, was generally forced to appoint a sophisticated, rather liberal governor. The city of Smyrna itself was managed by a municipal body under which the subject nationalities (*millet*s) were governed by their religious heads aided by elected councils. By the Capitulations, European residents of Smyrna (including the Franks and Levantines) were placed under the jurisdiction of their consuls, of which there were some seventeen in the city, one for each major country that did business there. Cases involving both European and Ottoman subjects were brought before the *tijaret-i mejlisi*, a tribunal of commerce on which each consulate had a representative. Foreign nations maintained their own post offices in Smyrna so that, besides the Ottoman post, there were fifteen others. As the second city of the empire, Smyrna enjoyed respectable provincial and municipal governments by 1914.⁶

⁶ Robert H. Hewsen, *Armenia: A Historical Atlas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 186.

The Quarters

Smyrna consisted of five major quarters: Muslim, Armenian, Greek, Jewish, and Frank, but these tended to overlap one another, and the wealthiest members of each nationality had their homes in the European quarter close to the quay.⁷ The Armenian quarter called *Haynots* lay directly back of the harbor in the center of the city. It was noted for its cleanliness and for its well-built houses and wide streets. Gutted by a fire in 1845 and afterward laid out along European lines, it consisted of fifty-four blocks of varying sizes, the main thoroughfares of which were the streets called Basmakhane and Reshediye.⁸ The main Turkish quarter, as customary in a number of Ottoman towns with mixed populations, occupied the highest part of the city, on the slopes of Mount Pagos, a jumble of ramshackle huts, vine-covered wooden houses, some fine old mansions, narrow, crooked streets, and old fountains. With its veiled women in traditional Muslim garb, men smoking water pipes, and professional letter writers sitting at tables on street corners, it was very much a picture out of the *Arabian Nights*. The chief quarters of the Greeks were Mortakia and Mezarakie. Like the Armenian quarter, these tended to be highly Westernized but, never having been completely rebuilt, they were less modern in appearance.

The center of Smyrna's life was the quay and the Rue Franque which ran parallel to it. The quay, built along the harbor by a French company in the years 1870–75, ran along the waterfront from the *konak* (government building) to the railroad station at the promontory called the Point and to the street called Bella Vista. Here were the docks and wharves, the passport building, the offices of the various import-export houses, the great watchtower of the konak, the Theatre de Smyrne, the Armenian Theater, the Grand Hotel Huck, and the Grand Hotel Kramer Palace. Here, too, were the homes of the more prosperous merchants (mainly Greek, Armenian, and Dutch), most of them elegant mansions, and here were found the cafes and, later, cinemas, as well as several of the consulates, among which the French was the most impressive. As for the crowded and bustling Rue Franque, it was lined with commercial establishments, department stores, and wholesale houses of the Greeks, Armenians, Franks, and Levantines. Set apart from the quay and the Rue Franque were the two bazaars of

⁷ Housepian, *Smyrna Affair*, p. 91.

⁸ Hewsen, *Armenia*, pp. 186–87 and map 174.

Smyrna, which were always plentifully supplied with grapes, fresh figs, melons, cherries, and pomegranates, as well as every kind of European import. Here on market days came the Zeybeks, mountaineers from the hills in back of the city, who, after selling their wares, would delight the locals with their famed "eagle dance." In season, baskets of rose petals lined the street to be sold to make rose-petal jam, a favorite delicacy served with pastry and tea or Turkish coffee. The bakeries, open to the streets, filled the air with the scent of freshly baked breads.⁹

Economic Situation

The basis of the economic prosperity of Smyrna was the import-export trade that provided most of the city's wealth. The principal American companies active in Smyrna were Standard Oil, the great McAndrews and Forbes licorice firm, with its spacious offices and hundreds of employees and laborers, and all of the major tobacco firms. Together, their business in the city totaled millions annually. Companies dealing in the export of figs, raisins, and carpets were also among the most active in the local commerce. There were 391 factories in Smyrna in 1922, 344 of them Greek, 14 of them Turkish, and the rest owned by a variety of nationalities including Armenians. A bustling commercial center, with tramways clattering on the quay and along the principal streets, Smyrna increasingly took on the atmosphere of a city of southern Europe as the nineteenth century drew to a close and was a considerably more Westernized city in appearance and life than Constantinople ever became.¹⁰

Churches and Schools

Besides twenty mosques, there were thirteen Greek Orthodox churches in Smyrna, including the cathedral Saint Photinos (Aghia Fotini), and three Armenian churches, including the great cathedral of Saint Stephen (Surb Stepanos) on Moda Street, built in the Greek style in the sixteenth century and restored in 1853.¹¹ There were also eleven

⁹ Housepian, *Smyrna Affair*, pp. 88-89; Henry (Hrant) Hewsens, native of Smyrna, personal account, 1948.

¹⁰ Archavir Hewsensian, native of Smyrna, successive interviews, 1948-1990.

¹¹ Kosian, *Hayk i Zmiurnia*: for Surb Stepanos Cathedral, vol. 1, ch. 6; for illustrations, pp. 52, 62, 65; for the ground plan, see p. 59.

Catholic churches (one of them Armenian), one large Protestant church, three Protestant chapels, and one Roman Catholic monastery, Santa Maria, founded and occupied by Austrian monks. As in every Ottoman city, the different sects maintained separate cemeteries.

Smyrna boasted a number of educational facilities. Besides two large Muslim schools, there were the Saint/Surb Mesropian (Mesrobian) School for Boys, and the Saint/Surb Hripsime (Hripsimian) School for Girls, both Armenian institutions, the former founded at the end of the eighteenth century almost immediately after the Ottoman government allowed the minorities to open their own schools. In addition, the Armenian Catholic Mekhitarist Fathers, based in Venice, maintained a well-organized school in the city. There was also an American Boys' School, the prestigious International College, located in the suburb of Paradiso outside the city, and an American Girls' School, called the Collegiate Institute, both founded by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, whose Smyrna offices were also located in Paradiso. The two principal native schools, however, were Greek: the Evangelical School for Boys and the Homerion School for Girls. Both were of great merit, the former under the protection of the British government. Smyrna also possessed a large barracks, twenty-five baths, fifty khans (inns), and ten hospitals—two of them Turkish (one civil and one military) and one of them a large Greek hospital open to all. There were also separate orphanages run by Turks, Greeks, Catholics, and Protestants. The Armenian National Hospital, Surb Lusavorich (Gregory the Illuminator), was founded in 1801.¹²

Intellectual, Cultural, and Social Life

Smyrna was the original home of the nineteenth-century Western Armenian renaissance, which only later spread to Constantinople, and the city enjoyed a rich intellectual and cultural life. In the second half of the nineteenth century, one individual around whom much of this activity centered was the Smyrna journalist, educator, and translator Matteos Mamourian (Matheos Mamurian, 1830–1901).¹³ Other fig-

¹² Ibid., pp. 164, 166, for the Armenian National Hospital.

¹³ On Mamourian, see Agop J. Hacikyan et al., *The Heritage of Armenian Literature*, vol. 3: *From the Eighteenth Century to Modern Times* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005), pp. 305–15. The chief accomplishment of the Smyrna Armenian renaissance was the creation of a modern dialect of the Armenian language for

ures in the establishing of the Western Armenian cultural revival in Smyrna were the author and translator Grigor Chilinkirian (Krikor Chilingirian/Tchilinguerian, 1839–1916), the scientist and philologist Galust Kostandian (Kalusd Gosdantian, 1843–1898), the author, translator, and lexicographer Mesrop Nuparian (Mesrob Nubarian, 1842–1924), the author and linguist Stepan Voskanian (Sdepan Vosgan, 1825–1901), the poet and educator Ruben Vorberian (Rupen Vorperian, 1874–1931), the humorist Harutiun Alpiar (alias Chrysanthemum, 1864–1919), the lawyer and social worker Mihran Sevasly (1863–1935), the cartographer Zadik Khanzatian (Zatig Khanzadian), the journalist and publisher Grigor (Krikor) Mserian, and the journalist Hrand Mamurian (Hrant Mamourian, son of Matteos).¹⁴

There were many newspapers in Smyrna in Turkish, Greek, Armenian, and French. The most important Armenian periodical was *Arevelian Mamul* (Oriental Press), edited by Matteos Mamourian. In addition to these, European publications could be purchased even though they might be out of date by the time they arrived. Smyrna had a Greek library at the Evangelical School with more than 30,000 volumes and more than 100 manuscripts. There was also an Armenian library in the city, but it was smaller.

Besides the Theatre de Smyrne and the Armenian Theater, Smyrna had three other stages: Theatre des Quais, Alhambra, and Garden of Eden. Here local groups performed and there were occasional presentations of French operettas or, less often, a touring Italian opera company. These, together with the many cafes, presented the only nightlife in the city, but, during the carnival season preceding Lent, many subscription balls were given for benevolent purposes, some of these annual events dating from at least the 1830s. One of the most interesting features of Smyrna social life was the clubs called *kasins* (casinos), which had their own buildings and sponsored most of these balls. The people of Smyrna were generally light-hearted, gregarious, famed for their love of balls and gambling, and inveterate “joiners.” The original

use by Western Armenians. Loosely based on the Armenian spoken in Constantinople and a highly artificial creation, Standard Western Armenian has nonetheless been adopted by all Armenian schools outside the former Soviet Union, Iran, and Southeast Asia. Not solely the work of Matteos Mamourian, this new modern Armenian was used in the Mesropian school where he taught and was advocated and advanced in his journal, *Arevelian Mamul*. See Hewsén, *Armenia*, p. 187.

¹⁴ H. Thorossian, *Histoire de la littérature arménienne* (Paris: H. Thorossian, 1951), 288, 305; Hacıyan et al., *Heritage of Armenian Literature*, pp. 66, 265–66, 306–07, 366–67, 393–94.

kasin, founded by the British in the eighteenth century, was open only to Franks and Levantines until the nineteenth century, when the Greeks established one of their own, after which the British Club was opened to Greeks and Armenians as well. By 1914, there were four major clubs in the city: the Cercle de Smyrne, frequented mostly by British, French, and Americans; the Sporting Club, with a fine building and garden down by the quay; the Greek Club; and the Country Club near the American International College in Paradiso, with an excellent golf course and race track. Other, lesser clubs—literary, artistic, theatrical, hunting, and sporting—also existed, besides the Charitable Society founded in 1861 and The Ladies' Benevolent Association, both of them Armenian organizations.¹⁵

After the Young Turk revolution of 1908 and the restoration of the Ottoman constitution, cultural activity increased among all classes and nationalities. Bands, theatrical groups, choral societies, and benevolent associations were formed in great numbers, an opera house was opened, the Boy Scout movement was introduced, soccer teams were organized, a German orphanage was added to the earlier ones, and a large Italian school was opened. In all these activities, however, with the notable exception of scouting, Muslims, Greeks, and Armenians kept apart. Smyrna to the end was, by and large, a segregated city.

The Smyrna Hinterland

Smyrna was located in one of the most historic areas of Asia Minor, the ancient land of Ionia. Two Roman aqueducts at Paradiso still crossed the Melas River. Nearby was Mount Pagos with its old fortress, the Kadife Kale, and the Profkitilia Greek convent. Large numbers of Armenians were to be found in the neighboring towns of Aidin, Denizli, Nazilli, Eodemish (Ödemiş), Kasaba, Bayindir, Krkaghach, Kinik, Manisa (ancient Magnesia), Aksar, Menemen, and Bergama (ancient Pergamum). A popular pilgrimage site for the local Christians was the ruins of Ephesus, reputedly the last home of the Virgin Mary, where the remains of the theater in which Saint Paul preached to the Ephesians, the only theater mentioned in the Bible, could still be seen.¹⁶

¹⁵ Archavir Hewsenian interview.

¹⁶ For the hinterland of Smyrna, see volume 2 of Kosian, *Hayk i Zmiurnia*. See also Armenian Smyrna Association, *Mer Smiurnian/Mer Izmir ev shrjakay kaghaknere* [Our Smyrna and Outlying Cities] (New York: Zmiurnahay Miutium, 1961), pp. 153-81.

The Armenians of Smyrna escaped the horrors of the deportation and massacre of the Genocide of 1915 largely thanks to the efforts of its anglophile governor, Rahmi Bey,¹⁷ but the history of Armenian (as well as Greek) Smyrna came to an end in September 1922, when, after a three-year occupation by Greek forces, the city was captured by the Turkish Nationalist forces on September 9, looted, and by the end of the month burned to the ground. Its Christian population, Armenian and Greek, was massacred, deported or forced to flee (September 9-30), the butchering of its Greek prelate, Metropolitan Chrysostomos, paralleling the martyrdom of Saint Polycarp, its first bishop, eighteen centuries earlier. Ultimately, many thousands of people were killed and even more deported to the interior, where they suffered massive losses. This disaster ended what had probably been the most successful experiment in ethnic and religious toleration in the multi-ethnic and multi-confessional Ottoman Empire.

¹⁷ Housepian, *Smyrna Affair*, p. 110.

From *Armenian Smyrna/Izmir*,
Volume 11 in the series *Historic Armenian Cities and Provinces*
edited by Richard G. Hovannisian (Costa Mesa, 2012),
Chapter 8, pp. 167-175.



MATTEOS MAMOURIAN:
A SMYRNEAN CONTRIBUTOR TO THE
WESTERN ARMENIAN RENAISSANCE

Robert H. Hewsen

*"An enslaved people's first and only savior is itself, its
own work, its own inner strength, its own enlightenment,
its own unity and determination."*
—Matteos Mamourian.

Smyrna may be regarded as the original home of the Western Armenian Renaissance, which only later spread to Constantinople, and for decades prior to its destruction in the great fire of 1922, the city enjoyed a rich cultural life. For decades, one of the major individuals around whom all of this activity centered was the Smyrna journalist, educator, intellectual, and public figure Matteos Mamourian (Madteos Mamurian, 1830–1901).¹ The legacy of Matteos Mamourian survives today not only in his contribution to modern Armenian thought and his many translations of European literature, but perhaps most of all in his role in the formation of the modern Western Armenian vernacular of which he was one of the leading architects, proponents, and practitioners.

Matteos Mamourian was one of the brightest figures in the Armenian renaissance that characterized the last decades of the nineteenth century. An intellectual engagé, he was an author, translator, publicist, historian, journalist, linguist, essayist, critic, teacher, and political economist.²

¹ The author's great-grandmother was a member of the Mamourian family, his grandfather was educated in Smyrna in one of Mamourian's schools, and his father and uncles grew up on Mamourian's translations of the works of the elder Alexandre Dumas (père).

² Vahé Oshagan, *The English Influence on the West Armenian Literature in the Nineteenth Century* (Cleveland OH: Cleveland State University/Caravan Books, 1982), p. 17.

Mamourian (as he, himself, spelled his name in Latin transcription) came from a distinguished and well-to-do family that was closely related to another important Smyrna family, the Nubarians (to which belonged the celebrated Egyptian statesman, Nubar Pasha) and through them to the Prince Nubar, who had been one of the participants in the rising of Davit Bek against the Muslims in Eastern Armenia in the 1720s.³

Born in Smyrna on October 17, 1830, the son of Hovhannes Mamourian, Matteos was first educated at the Mesropian School in his native city graduating in 1845,⁴ and then at the Mooradian School in Paris from which he graduated in 1851, receiving the first prize in his class from the hands of the French author Lamartine.⁵ Returning to Smyrna the same year, Mamourian, though only twenty, collaborated with Markos Aghabekian in the establishment of the Aghabekian School there.⁶ He then served as a teacher at the Nersesian School in Constantinople in 1853 before acting as an interpreter during the Crimean War. In 1856-57, he audited courses at Cambridge University and then embarked on a grand tour of Europe and its cultural centers, including St. Petersburg. From 1860 to 1865, he served in the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople and for a time held the position of head of the chancellery.⁷

Settling in Smyrna in 1865, Mamourian became a writer, occupying himself with journalism, literature, education, and the translation of foreign works into Armenian, a time-honored tradition among the Armenians, who have ever tried to enrich the culture of their people through introducing them to the thought of other advanced peoples of

³ Nubar Pasha Nubarian (1825-1899) was a grandson of the eighteenth century freedom-fighter, Prince Nubar. Although his surname is never used in the well-known, *Davit Bek, entir patmutiun* [Select History of Davit Bek], ed. Levon G. Khacheryan (Glendale: Alco Printing, 1988), it seems likely that he was a member of the family of Melik-Parsadanian of Siunik in what is now the southern part of the Republic of Armenia.

⁴ *Haykakan Sovetakan Hanragitaran* [Armenian Soviet Encyclopedia], vol. 7 (Erevan, Armenian Academy of Sciences, 1981), p. 198.

⁵ A.J. Hacikyan et al., *The Heritage of Armenian Literature*, vol. 3: *From the Eighteenth Century to Modern Times* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005), p. 305.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Oshagan, *English Influence*, p. 17, describes him as "Cambridge educated," a term suggesting that Mamourian was a graduate of that university. As a matter of fact, he simply attended some classes there as a scholarship student. Hacikyan, *Heritage of Armenian Literature*, p. 305.

the world.⁸ Mamourian began his career as a translator of selected works of the eighteenth-century French *philosophe* Voltaire (*Jeannot et Colin*, *Micromégas*, and *Zadig or The Book of Fate*). Gradually, his oeuvre came to include translations of such French literature as Alexandre Dumas' *The Three Musketeers* and *Twenty Years After*, P.-A. Beaumarchais' play, *The Barber of Seville*, Stendhal's novel *The Red and the Black*, Eugène Sue's *The Mysteries of Paris*, and Jules Verne's *The Mysterious Island* and his *Around the World in Eighty Days*.⁹ Mamourian's translation activity was not limited to French works; he rendered German literature into Armenian, as well, including Johann von Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* and works of Gotthold Lessing. From English, he translated Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*,¹⁰ and from Russian, some pieces of Tolstoy. In this way, Mamourian became perhaps the most prolific of modern Armenian authors producing some fifty volumes of translations of novels and dramatic works from French and English.¹¹

⁸ Oshagan, *English Influence*, p. 10. Earlier translations from foreign languages had brought Greek and Syriac works into Armenian, some of the former being the only surviving versions of works otherwise lost (for example, a treatise by St. Irenaeus of Lyon, the Alexander Romance of pseudo-Callisthenes, and the *Geography* of Pappus of Alexandria), while later translations included the works of Homer, Plato, Sophocles, Virgil, and Milton. These translations, however, were all made into Classical Armenian (*grabar*), whereas Mamourian and other translators of his day rendered European works into the modern vernacular (*ashkharhabar*), all the while honing, polishing, and expanding the range of the new Armenian as they accomplished their work. Syntax was stabilized, new words were created for modern concepts, and classical terms were modernized (for example, *hairenik* meaning "patrimony" in the classical tongue was employed to translate the various terms for "fatherland" in other languages).

⁹ Hacikyan, *Heritage of Armenian Literature*, p. 307. These translations of European literature were immensely popular among the reading public, many of whom (like this author's grandfather) would read them aloud in the evening gatherings at home, where illiterate young men in his employ were exposed to new ideas unknown in the villages from which they had come.

¹⁰ *Ivanhoe* was already greatly popular among Armenian readers literate in English, and it served as a model for Mamourian's own *Sev lerin marde*. See Oshagan, *English Influence*, pp. 19-20.

¹¹ Oshagan, *English Literature*, p. 17. For Mamourian's work, see Kevork Barakjian, *A Reference Guide to Modern Armenian Literature, 1500-1920* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000.), pp., 407-09; Hacikyan, *Heritage of Armenian Literature*, pp. 305-07.



Matteos Mamourian

Among his original compositions in Armenian, Mamourian wrote *A Short History of the World*; *A Short History of the Armenians to Our Time*; *Key to Armenian Composition* (pedagogical works for use in Armenian schools), and (under the pen name Vroyr) his *Armenian Letters* as well as children's books.¹² Mamourian also applied himself to writing for the stage but his one performed play, *Sefilets tune* (The House of Sefils, 1882) showed only that his talents, however rich, lay elsewhere.¹³ While engaged in all this literary activity, Matteos Mamourian found time to serve successively as the principal of two Armenian schools in Smyrna, the Mesropian School for Boys and the Hripsimian School for Girls.¹⁴

As a journalist Mamourian is best remembered for his influential newspaper, the *Arevelian Mamul* (Oriental Press), which he founded in 1871 and served both as publisher and editor for thirty years, and which, with its emphasis on political, cultural, and social matters, as well as on patriotism, enlightenment, and education soon became one of the most influential organs of the Armenian cultural renaissance. Indeed, it has been called "one of the most forward looking, balanced periodicals of the Revival Movement."¹⁵

The publication of this journal also served as a laboratory for Mamourian's work on a standard modern Armenian language. Drawing upon the earlier works of Nahapet (Nahabed) Rusinian (1819-1886), Ghevond (Leon) Alishan (1820-1901), Mkrtich Khrimian "Hayrik" (1820-1907), Karapet Iutiuchian (Garabed Utujian, 1823-1904), Arsen Aytinian (Arsen Aidinian, 1825-1902), Grigor Otian (Krikor Odian, 1834-1887), and Grigor Chilinkirian (Krikor Chilingirian, 1839-1923), Mamourian was influenced by the Armenian spoken in Constantinople.¹⁶ One might conjecture that had it not been for the simultaneous development of an Eastern Armenian vernacular among Rus-

¹² Mamourian also wrote under the pen names M.M. Aprsam and V. Shahnur. See Bardakjian, *A Reference Guide*, p. 407. The Armenian titles of the cited works are *Hamarot endhanur patmutiun tprotsats hamar*; *Hamarot patmutiun Hayots minjev mer orere*; *Banali hayeren sharadrutian*; *Haykakan namakani*; *Manr veper u daser manr tghots hamar*; *Gitelik u partik tghayots*.

¹³ H. Thorossian, *Histoire de la littérature arménienne* (Paris: H. Thorossian, 1951), p. 283.

¹⁴ Hacikyan, *Heritage of Armenian Literature*, p. 306.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 307. So valued was the *Arevelian Mamul* that as late as the end of the twentieth century it was still possible to find bound volumes of the journal in second-hand bookstores in Istanbul.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

sian Armenian authors, based largely on the dialect of Erevan, it might have been possible to forge a single modern Armenian vernacular on the order of modern German or modern Greek. This was not to be, although the Western and Eastern dialects of modern Armenian are for the most part mutually intelligible.

A prolific writer of articles and essays for his own journal, Mamourian also wrote articles for several other periodicals including *Tsaghik*, founded by Grigor Chilinkirian (of which for a time Mamourian was co-editor), as well as for *Meghu*, *Kilikia*, *Varaga*, *Zhamanak*, *Metsmua*, *Arshaloys*, and *Goyutiun*. In this way, he extended the reach of his pen beyond Smyrna to Constantinople and elsewhere.

In his political views concerning the then raging "Armenian Question," Mamourian was one with Father Garegin Srvandztiants (1840-1892) and those other intellectuals of the time who rejected any reliance on the aid of European powers for the salvation of the Armenian people, using the term "inanity" for any such false hopes. Mamourian went on to argue that "an enslaved people's first and only savior is itself, its own work, its own inner strength, its own enlightenment, its own unity and determination." The education of Armenian youth was to him the true road to national revival. Though receptive to whatever positive the West had to offer, Mamourian stood out among Armenian thinkers of his day in his assertion that not everything that came from the West was automatically of value and that not everything native to the East was to be rejected. In opposition to the conservative Constantinople elite of merchants and bankers, Mamourian and other like-minded thinkers called for the centering of their efforts and resources within the ancestral Armenian homeland. For persons such as Garegin Srvandztiants, Grigor Artsruni, Mkrtich Portukalian, and Khrimian "Hayrik" (1892-1907, the Patriarch of Constantinople and later Catholicos of All Armenians), what happened in Smyrna and even in Constantinople was of lesser importance. The province of Vaspurakan (Van), the only jurisdiction in Ottoman Armenia in which the Armenians still formed a majority, was the heart of Armenia, and this is where the Armenians should focus their efforts at a national cultural revival.¹⁷

The *locus classicus* for Mamourian's political and social ideas is his *Sev lerin marde* (The Man from the Black Mountain), a long, me-

¹⁷ See E. Arnavourdian's review of A.E. Sharurian, *Srpouhi Dussap, Her Life and Work* (Erevan, Erevan State University, 1963), in Armenian News Network/Groong, 2003.

diocre historical novel somewhat in the manner of Dumas but heavily influenced by Scott's *Ivanhoe*.¹⁸ Published over a period of ten years (1871-81) as a serial in his journal *Arevelian Mamul* it was, unfortunately, never finished. His philosophical and patriotic ideas, however, were best expressed in his novel *Angliakan namakani* (English Letters). Published in 1872, this is a work of considerable merit.¹⁹ Obviously patterned after English and French epistolary novels of the previous century, this was less a novel per se than a didactic work aimed at instructing the reader. An anglophile, well-versed in English culture from his sojourn at Cambridge, Mamourian, in his *English Letters*, expresses a profound admiration for English institutions and culture, often contrasting these unfavorably with the deficiencies of their Armenian parallels. Through this work, which made him famous, Mamourian introduced, for the first time, a serious English influence upon the Armenian Renaissance previously dominated by the influence of the French.²⁰ A man of advanced views in many areas of late nineteenth century thought, Mamourian was impressed with the significance, if not all of the content, of *Mayta*, the first novel of the pioneer Armenian woman writer, Srpuhi Tiusab (Srpuihi Diusap, née Vahanian, 1841-1901). Focusing, as it did on women's right to seek employment, *Mayta* was the first Armenian work to advocate women's rights in any arena and so introduced the new but growing feminist movement in Europe into Armenian literature. Recognizing the novel's serious flaws (noting, for example, the absence of "authentic national context" in the work and the author's "lack of concrete knowledge" of Armenian social life), Mamourian nevertheless echoed Grigor Chilinkirian's belief that the novel's "audacious advocacy" of women's rights marked a "turning point in Armenian literature."²¹ Besides Tiusab, intellectuals such as Mamourian and his Smyrna colleague, Chilinkirian (and others in Eastern Armenia such as Artsruni and Nalbandian) devoted considerable thought and argument to women's rights and to their role in society, laying the groundwork for future advocacy in this important direction despite conservative arguments in defense of the status quo.

¹⁸ Oshagan, *English Influence*, p. 20, is insistent on the similarities between the two works.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 18; Thorossian, *Histoire de la littérature arménienne*, p. 283.

²⁰ Oshagan, *English Influence*, pp. 3, 18.

²¹ See Arnavourdian's review, note 17 above.

A prolific writer of books and articles, Mamourian had a profound influence on the development of the emerging Western Armenian literary language, and through his intense discussions of the subject and the example that he set in his publications, his impact on the language endures to the present day. For a long time in the nineteenth century, there was a struggle between those who wanted to create a unified Armenian language by the simple device of reviving the Classical *grabar* and those who, realizing the impracticality of this, sought to create a new Armenian, clear, simple, standardized and purified of foreign vocabulary.²² Mamourian stood with the latter group. for he was not alone in his creation of a Western Armenian vernacular, being both influenced by and at the same time influencing like-minded writers. By 1890, the battle that had raged for some sixty years had been won and Classical Armenian (as different a language as Latin is from Italian), however, beautiful and beloved, had been left to the care of the Armenian Church and to scholars.

Mamourian was fortunate to have flourished in a period so filled with brilliant thinkers, new ideas, and such exciting prospects for the revival of Armenian culture. He was, however, almost entirely a product and representative of the Western Armenian renaissance and had no close connections with what was transpiring among the Eastern Armenian intellectuals of Tiflis, the Armenian cultural center in the Russian Empire.

Matteos Mamourian died in Smyrna on January 2, 1901 at the age of 70. His pioneering *Arevelian Mamul* lingered for a few years longer but closed in 1909. Revived in 1919, it was silenced forever in the events of 1922. In his private life, Mamourian, one of seven brothers, was married and had a single son, Hrant, who continued in his father's footsteps until his own death in Paris in 1937.²³ During his long life, Mamourian became one of the most respected and influential members of the Western Armenian renaissance, his voice being heard on every major issue of national importance for forty years.²⁴ Although more than a century has passed since his death and despite his importance to Armenian intellectual history, unfortunately very little has

²² Hachikyan, *Heritage of Armenian Literature*, pp. 54-55, 61-63.

²³ The youngest son of Mamourian's youngest brother was still living in Philadelphia with his family in the early 1970s.

²⁴ Hakob Oshakan [Hagop Oshagan]. *Hamapatker arevmtahay grakanutian* [Panorama of Western Armenian Literature], vol. 4 (Jerusalem: St. James Press, 1956), p. 448.

been published about him in any Western language.²⁵ It is hoped that this brief piece will serve as a tribute to Matteos Mamourian's contributions to Armenian literature and culture.

²⁵ An exception may be considered Vahé Oshagan's *The English Influence on the West Armenian Literature*. Even in Armenian, works specifically devoted to Matteos Mamourian are not numerous. These include Hayk M. Ghazaryan, *Matteos Mamuryan* (Erevan: Haypethrat, 1961); and A.B. Karinyan, *M. Mamuryane mshakoyti patmutian masin* [Matteos Mamourian on the History of Culture] (Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences, 1973). The relative brevity of the article in the Armenian Soviet Encyclopedia, vol. 7, p. 198, suggests the apparent lack of interest or freedom in Armenia to explore the literature of the Western Armenian Renaissance, at least in the Soviet period. Nevertheless, a volume of Mamourian's writings titled *Erker* [Works], edited by H. Ghazaryan and H. Poghosyan was published in Erevan in 1966. The Catholicosate of Cilicia in Antelias, Lebanon, has sponsored more recent publications of and about Mamourian.